



NEWS RELEASE

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Home Depot Signs On as Solar Decathlon Contest Sponsor

14 Universities To Construct Solar-Powered Homes on the National Mall

Golden, Colo., March 1, 2002 – The Home Depot, the world's largest home improvement retailer, will co-sponsor the U. S. Department of Energy's first-ever Solar Decathlon, joining BP Solar, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and DOE's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL). The Solar Decathlon is a team competition among universities to design and build the most energy-efficient solar-powered homes. This year's competition will be held on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., from Sept. 19 to Oct. 9.

"Home Depot has always had a strong interest in promoting energy efficiency and creating new markets for environmental technologies," said Matt Stevens, Home Depot's global product merchant for energy and the environment. "The Solar Decathlon provides us with a great opportunity to showcase the products and materials any homeowner can use to cut their energy costs."

The Home Depot will provide financial and in-kind support, including professional advice on energy efficient materials and homebuilding techniques to teams. In addition, the company will set up a special learning center near the contest site to provide information and advice on energy efficiency to homeowners and home builders.

Last year, The Home Depot established a national store initiative -- called the "E-plus" program -- to feature a broad range of energy conservation products. While the initiative boosted sales of conservation products as much as six-fold in some categories, it also established Home Depot as the leading source for energy-efficient products and information.

"Home Depot's enormous market presence, national reputation and knowledge of building materials will be a tremendous benefit to the contest and to the teams," said Richard King, Solar Decathlon director. "We are very pleased to have the company's support and involvement."

Solar Decathlon homes actually will be built, displayed and evaluated on the National Mall, between the Capitol and the Washington Monument, beginning on Sept. 19. The competition among the university teams will give architecture and engineering students practical experience with the design and construction of energy efficient homes that incorporate solar energy into the design.

"Solar powered homes can be built with today's technology and today's building materials," said King. "This contest will demonstrate that we can have attractive, comfortable homes using only energy provided by the sun. That's good for our nation's energy security and for the environment."

Engineering and architecture students from 14 schools nationwide have entered the contest. DOE has provided each team with a \$5,000 stipend to be used toward the construction of their solar house. Each team will raise the remainder of the funds they will need to design, construct and transport the houses to Washington, D.C. Each house, limited to roughly 500 square feet for purposes of the competition, will be judged on 10 criteria to determine which most efficiently employs solar energy for heating, cooling, hot water, lighting, appliances, computers and charging an electric car. Competing in 10 contests at the same time makes the Decathlon an especially difficult challenge.

NREL

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A jury of world-renowned architects will evaluate the attractiveness, livability and effectiveness of each home's design. Experts from DOE and NREL will measure each home's energy production and use.

To win the Solar Decathlon, a team must blend aesthetics and modern conveniences with maximum energy production and optimal efficiency.

The Solar Decathlon will be open to the public. Exhibits featuring information on each team's entry and the overall contest will be adjacent to the Solar Decathlon village on the Mall.

BP Solar is one of the world's leading solar electric companies. A full service company, BP Solar manufactures, designs, markets and installs a wide range of crystalline silicon and new generation thin film solar electric products and systems that are well suited for residential, commercial and industrial applications for remote and gridconnected systems. The company has product deployed in over 160 countries and operates manufacturing plants in the U.S., Spain, Australia and India.

Founded in 1978, in Atlanta, The Home Depot is the world's largest home improvement retailer currently operating 1,350 stores in the United States, Canada, Mexico and Puerto Rico. The company reported net sales for fiscal 2000 of \$45.7 billion and employs approximately 250,000 people.

Since 1875, the American Institute of Architects has represented the professional interests of America's architects. Through education, government advocacy, community redevelopment and public outreach activities, the AIA and its 70,000 members work to achieve a higher standard of professionalism for architects while expressing their commitment to excellence in design and livability in our nation's buildings and cities.

NREL is a DOE national laboratory managed by Midwest Research Institute, Battelle and Bechtel. In addition to its work in solar photovoltaics and energy-efficient buildings, the lab is a leading center for research into wind energy, plant- and waste-derived fuels and chemicals, advanced vehicle design, geothermal energy and hydrogen fuel cells. Visit NREL online at www.nrel.gov.

For more information regarding the Solar Decathlon see <http://www.solardecathlon.org>.